

U.S. Embassy Kinshasa

The American Cultural Center

Faster, Safer, Easier Visas

The U.S. Embassy is pleased to announce improvements in the processing of nonimmigrant visa applications. Beginning June 1, 2009, all appointments for non-immigrant visa interviews will be made online, a method that promises to be faster, safer, and more convenient for the Embassy's customers. The system is free though there is still an application fee of \$131 to be paid at Citigroup.

Using the Embassy website, visa applicants can submit their application and select a time and date for an interview. Appointments should be scheduled two to three weeks in advance of proposed travel. The wait time can vary from two days to several weeks, and increase during times of heavy demand. Current waiting times will be posted on the site. In case of an emergency, requests for expedited appointment scheduling must be submitted by email. We will respond within 24 hours. If you already have a scheduled visa appointment prior to June 1, 2009, there is no need to make a new appointment.

More detailed instructions on the new appointment request process are available on the website at <http://kinshasa.state.gov>

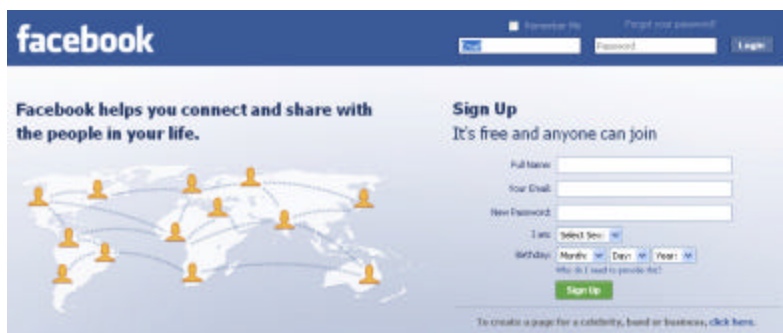
Amicus Makes Friends of Congo and U.S.

Congolese alumni of U.S. Embassy supported educational and exchange programs have formed a group to build stronger ties between alumni, the Embassy and the Congolese Community. AMICUS (which stands for Amity-Congo-U.S.) was officially formed last year and now has more than 400 active members, all of whom have participated in visitor programs from in the United States from as early as 1960. On May 13, AMICUS, in collaboration with the International Women Club (IWC) and UNESCO, conducted a work session on Women Leadership in DRC. The 24 participants included the IWC President, spouse of the U.S. ambassador Mrs. Linda Garvelink and the AMICUS board committee. They discussed the eligibility criteria to nominate the first DRC "Woman of Courage." Website: <http://amicusalumni.com>.



Join us on Facebook

Embassy Kinshasa and CALI now have their own Facebook pages. Please visit the sites and make friends with them. Every day there's something exciting, like CALI's "word of the day," (recent entries include jingoism, whinge and aggrandize) as well as the latest news and commentary from the Embassy community. It's a great way to keep in touch with old friends, and make new ones. When you visit the sites, please link us to your communities and friends, so we can expand the reach of our social media. We will continue to update and improve the Facebook pages, so any suggestions are welcome. See you there!



Once on Facebook at www.facebook.com, search for our pages at U.S. Embassy Kinshasa, L'Ambassade des Etats Unis, Kinshasa, or Congo American Language Institute, and become a fan.

U.S. Embassy Kinshasa Announces the Mark Twain Literary Prize

Embassy Kinshasa is proud to announce the Mark Twain Short Story Prize for Congolese writers. Public Affairs will award \$500 each month for six months to the best short story written by a Congolese writer currently living in Congo. There will be grand finale award of \$1000 given to the best story selected from among the six winners.

Each work is to be an unpublished, original work, written in French, by a citizen of the DRC currently resident in that country. The first deadline for submissions is June 15.

The prize is designed to benefit those Congolese writers of fiction whose work best exemplifies the spirit of Mark Twain, the celebrated American writer whose best-known works, like *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*, have earned a permanent place in American literature. Twain's ability to capture the different voices of a vast and diverse country, helped create a truly American fiction. His passion for truth and skepticism toward established power animated both his journalism and fiction. Through the Mark Twain literary prize, the Embassy hopes to encourage a literary tradition in the Congo, and support freedom of expression.

For more details on the contest, please visit the Embassy website at <http://kinshasa.state.gov>.

Talking up New Media

More than fifty students of the school of communications at Catholic Faculties of Kinshasa participated in a presentation on social media given by Kinshasa PAS on May 5. The highlight of the event was a talk on "Obama – the First Facebook President," by Patrick Cannon, associate professor of government at California State University, Sacramento. Professor Cannon is currently serving as a Fulbright Lecturer, teaching courses in International Relations during the spring 2009 term at the University of Kinshasa. During the event at Catholic Faculties, Professor Cannon explained how Barack Obama used the social media sites Facebook and My Space to communicate with voters, generate enthusiasm for his historic race for the White House and raise funds for the campaign. Using a visual display of Obama's personal pages, Professor Cannon gave the students concrete examples of how they could build their own careers by using the same techniques that helped propel Obama to the White House.

In addition to Professor Cannon's talk, teaching sessions on new media technology were presented by William Strassberger, Public Affairs Officer from the State Department in Washington, and Katya Thomas, PAO Kinshasa. The program was well-received by the students, many of whom can only access internet through the limited facilities offered by the university, or at local cyber-cafes. Many cited the challenges they faced in getting on-line, yet expressed enthusiasm for new media, particularly in developing their professional portfolio. While some students had previously thought that the new media were predominantly useful only for social purposes, the presentations demonstrated how these tools can help them enhance their education, build professional skills, and possibly get a job upon graduation.

The next day, William Strassberger, spoke on the subject of American Press to a group of fifteen Congolese journalists at the PD Auditorium, Embassy Kinshasa. Strassberger, who is on a multi-country visit to Africa, spoke about the nuts and bolts of the newspaper business, the ethics and ground rules of responsible reporting, and the challenge of new media. Opening the floor for questions from the start, Strassberger led a lively conversation between professionals. The journalists were very interested in learning about the business models of American newspapers. While most of the journalists have regular access to the internet, they expressed a desire to learn more about new media so they could better incorporate tools like Facebook and blogs into their daily business.



USAID Donates Books to Protestant University

On April 21, USAID shared a private donation of nearly 2,000 books with the Protestant University in Congo (UPC). The ceremony took place in the library of the UPC. These books, a donation from American citizens Ray and Claudia Parker, were shipped from the United States to Kinshasa with the assistance of USAID. The USAID/DRC Mission Director Stephen Haykin mentioned in his remarks that "this donation reflects the commitment and support of the United States to the education sector in the DRC."

The U.S. Embassy and USAID are actively engaged in programs and activities in the DRC to address the country's education needs, including school rehabilitation, provision of teaching materials and textbooks, and teacher training. The UPC Rector Ngoy Bolia thanked the U.S. Embassy, and especially USAID, for the support in ensuring the safe shipment of the donated books to Kin-